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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

"THE RELIGIOUS ISSUE"

THREE THINGS, at least, seem quite clear, as a result of the voting in Wisconsin's Democratic primary. First, Senator Kennedy's victory was impressive but not decisive. Secondly, Senator Humphrey ran much better than most observers expected. Thirdly, the "religious issue" is now more firmly a part of the campaign than ever.

We grant this last point with considerable reluctance. Without really expecting that it would be so, we had at least some faint hopes that the results in Wisconsin, no matter which man won, would lessen the vote-getting or vote-losing significance of religion for any Presidential candidate.

If, for example, the Wisconsin voting showed that farmers, Catholic and Protestant, were solidly for Hubert Humphrey and could not abide John F. Kennedy, this fact would have reduced the religious issue. Or if city-dwellers, Protestant and Catholic, regarded Senator Humphrey as the farmers' candidate and overwhelmingly supported Senator Kennedy, that fact would have shifted the emphasis away from religion. Similarly, the edge would have been taken off the religious issue if large, predominantly Protestant areas had supported Senator Kennedy or if equally large, predominantly Catholic areas had supported Senator Humphrey.

None of these things happened. True, there is some evidence that Catholic farmers in normally Republican areas expressed their dissatisfaction with Administration farm policies by voting for the Senator from Minnesota rather than for the one from Massachusetts, and Senator Kennedy did well in a few Protestant areas. But in neither case was the exception to the rule significant enough to cancel out the fact that each man did best in those areas where his own co-religionists were most numerous.

Furthermore, Senator Kennedy won in several areas which are heavily Catholic and normally Republican; this lends support to the claim that he could do well with Catholics who have been voting Republican in recent years, but, as many observers quickly pointed out, it also raises the question of "bloc voting" by Catholics and the danger of a massive reaction to this phenomenon among Protestant voters.

HERE LIES the danger. From this point until November, the chances of a political battle along religious lines are very great. Such a bitterly divisive struggle would help neither religion nor the nation. Yet averting it will not be easy, because the temptation for supporters of other candidates to make use of the religious issue against the front-running Senator Kennedy will be very great indeed. It should be noted here, to his credit, that Senator Humphrey has time and again reiterated his condemnation of any appeal to religious prejudice in order to win votes. But in the heat of a campaign he cannot control everything that is done even by his own supporters, let alone by those whose interest is not in helping him but in hurting Senator Kennedy.

The situation, then, is a delicate one. This seems a good time, therefore, to state once more some basic points, even though this must be done somewhat tentatively, since no one can pretend to speak with complete certainty on an issue which involves the feelings of millions of Catholic voters.

In the abstract, Catholic feeling about the Presidential candidacy of Senator Kennedy—or of any other Catholic, for that matter—is divided. As a recent *Newsweek* survey confirmed, some Catholics regret that the issue has ever arisen, fearing that it will simply arouse the prejudices of the Al Smith

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campaign all over again. Others think the issue has to be met sometime, and that it might as well be now.

In the concrete, on the other hand, the Wisconsin results seem to indicate that there may well be a significant "Catholic vote" for Senator Kennedy or any other serious Catholic candidate under certain circumstances. At a minimum these circumstances would have to include, we think, a choice between two candidates whose voting records are not distinctively different; we do not believe a Catholic of liberal political bent would vote for a Catholic conservative or a Catholic conservative for a Catholic liberal. But the fact that there is to at least a certain extent some "Catholic vote" for a candidate like Senator Kennedy in a race against Senator Humphrey seems clearly indicated in the Wisconsin returns.

Does this fact necessarily mean that Protestants will now vote *en masse* against a Catholic candidate? Perhaps, but before this polarization along religious lines is allowed to happen, Protestants should ask themselves how they would behave if the situation were reversed. When forty million Americans have never seen one of their members elected President, and when the religious issue played an unhappy role in the defeat of the only previous Catholic candidate, is it really so surprising if many Catholics are inclined to vote for a Catholic candidate, other things being equal? We think not.

Whatever "Catholic vote" there may be, we believe that it reflects only the natural desire of a very large minority to achieve symbolic recognition that they are, finally, more than second-class citizens. It does not represent a "Catholic plot." The Church as such has no stake in the election of a Catholic as President; it does not seek nor could it receive special favors from any Catholic who might become President. Indeed, we would go further: we do not think American Catholics would support a Catholic candidate who sought favors for the Catholic Church which were denied to others.

The fear of Rome that is part of the tradition of many Protestant groups has in the past often made its way into American politics. Indeed, in one sense, it might be said that the Know-Nothing movement and the Ku Klux Klan are as much a part of the American tradition as the National Conference of Christians and Jews. But this introduction of anti-papist sentiment into politics—followed, as it inevitably is, by Catholic resentment—represents, we think, an improper projection into the political arena of historic theological differences, reflecting Europe's religious divisions rather than any serious estimate of the American Catholic record of loyalty and devotion to this country. As such, the sooner the "religious issue" ceases to be a factor in American politics, the better off we will be.

In this connection sentiments expressed many years ago by President Theodore Roosevelt are highly appropriate. Replying to a letter on the subject, Mr. Roosevelt wrote: "To discriminate against a thoroughly upright citizen because he belongs to some particular church . . . is an outrage against that liberty of conscience which is one of the foundations of American life. . . . You say that 'the mass of the voters that are not Catholic will not support a man for any office, especially for President of the United States, who is a Roman Catholic.' I believe that when you say this you foully slander your fellow-countrymen." Events in the months ahead may prove us wrong, but today at least we would make Theodore Roosevelt's sentiments on the matter our own.

BRAVE NEW WORLD, INDEED

THE MOST recent revelation of corruption in our society is also, we are afraid, the most depressing. And the fact that almost no attention has been paid to it is perhaps the most depressing thing about it.

The story began in Miami, Florida, when a parent protested to the principal of the North Miami High School over the assignment of Huxley's *Brave New World* as required reading in the senior English course and Orwell's *1984* as recommended reading. They were "filthy" books, she said.

It is discouraging that anybody would be able to come to such a conclusion about these novels, but that was only the beginning. The principal of the high school didn't know anything about these books, and he turned the matter over to the Miami Superintendent of Schools. As luck would have it, he hadn't heard of the books either, and he took the problem to Miami's Director of High Schools. The Director of High Schools, it turned out, hadn't read the books either, but he was willing to take a look at them, maybe because there was nobody else to pass them on to. Anyway, examination of the offending books satisfied this gentleman they were indeed dubious fare, and they were banned forthwith from the Miami high school curriculum.

The final turn of the screw was yet to come, how-

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ever. Recently, the United States Commissioner of Education, Dr. Lawrence Gridley Derthick, was in Miami and was questioned by some local citizens on the banning of the Huxley and Orwell books. His reply was beyond satire: "I've never heard of those books, and I don't think it would be prudent of me to discuss them."

And so it ended. The New York *Post* and Murray Kempton raised a few cries of pain and disbelief, but the nation at large apparently found nothing exciting in the fact that two of the most celebrated books of this century, modern classics whose titles have become bywords in our language, are unknown not only to the administrators of a big city school system but to the highest ranking educational officer in the United States.

This, we submit, is a scandal, and a scandal of more fundamental importance than the rigging of quiz shows, the practice of payola, the breaches of ethics by members of federal agencies. The inner shabbiness of our tail-finned, chromium-plated civilization seems, in the light of this spectacle, no longer a mere charge, advanced only by professional viewers with alarm.

When a high government official is found in what is described delicately as a "conflict of interest," there is at least a flurry of publicity. There is at least an attempt at justification, at least the expectation that the official involved will soon be tendering a "regretful resignation" to the President. In this case, however, no explanation seems to be required or expected. According to the standards of the affluent society, apparently, malfeasance in matters pertaining to money is still a serious thing, but incompetence and malfeasance in something like education are not even worth talking about.

We wonder if Dr. Derthick ever heard of a book called *Decline of the West?*

THE NEED FOR MEDIATION

THE FORCES of racism in the South are doing their best to clear traffic from the middle of the road. Moderate, purposeful opinion among white Southerners is not only being rendered ineffective, it is in danger of being made inarticulate. If the voice of the moderate white Southerners is stilled or diminished, the eventual victory of the Negro in his fight for equal rights will be postponed. Worse than the possibility of further delay, however, is the possibility of widespread racial conflicts and extreme violence that we have so far fortunately escaped.

The voice of the adamant racist is still loud in the South, whether it speaks in terms of law and order, in terms of group fears and tensions, in terms of a benevolent paternalism, or in terms of undisguised power. That voice is not modified, apparently, even by the tragic events of South Africa and the world opinion which has caused even some Afrikaners to reflect upon and to modify their previous stand. A doctor from Virginia expressed his opinion confidently in a letter to the N.Y. *Times* recently. "Surely," he wrote, "the white people of the South are looking on with regret at the United States delegation to the United Nations intruding itself into South Africa's apartheid policy.

"The Southern states also have a tradition of segregation of which they are not at all ashamed. The Southerners feel, and I am sure the white South Africans do also, that the preservation of the white race can best be assured by such a policy. We do not wish in a few generation to become a race of mulattoes."

This is the voice of racism, naked and unabashed. The assumption that the white race will be overcome if the Negro is given equal rights, and that the "preservation of the white race" is a value to set above the rights of non-whites—these are clearly presuppositions of the Southern white extremists whom this writer to the *Times* represents. Opposing such racists, and the codes and conventions they would impose upon the South, is a new generation of Negroes whose most articulate spokesmen are students in the universities. These students are no longer satisfied with the gradual, painful gains Negroes have made in this country. They are not willing to pass on to their children the restrictions with which they are burdened.

These students find, in fighting for their rights, that they are opposed not only by white racists but, in a different fashion, by Negroes who have accustomed themselves to the idea of a long, drawn-out struggle. Marvin Robinson, a student at Southern University in Baton Rouge, La., put it this way: "We have been taught the Constitution of the United States. We have been taught that all men are created equal and that there is liberty and justice for all. But as soon as we try to put these teachings into practice we find outselves subjected to pressure from our own people." The pressure Mr. Robinson referred to was that incurred by students who engaged in the sit-down demonstrations at segregated lunch counters. For this activity they were expelled from the University by the President, Dr. Felton Clark, who explained that no alternative existed to the laws laid down by

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the all-white Board of Education that administers the University.

The situation at Southern University is representative of various situations throughout the South. These young Negroes are part of a movement that is not to be readily halted. Confident of ultimate victory, they wish to see it achieved as soon as possible. Although they are militant and determined, they are controlled and deliberate. It is largely because of their control that the fearful outbreaks which are a constant threat have been avoided so far. But the threat remains, and there is no reason to think the pressures will soon decrease.

In this situation the task of the moderate white Southerner is immediate and demanding. His task is not, of course, to find a middle-of-the-road position between right and wrong, racism and acceptance. His task is to continue to communicate to his white fellow-citizens, as the Negro can not, the recognition that Negro attainment of equal rights is inevitable, that the laws which guarantee those rights are integral to democracy, and that the dangers which will grow if these rights are not soon granted threaten Negro and white alike.

CONTROLLING EXHAUST FUMES

CALIFORNIA'S new anti-smog act forcefully illustrates the extent to which intervention by the authorities for social reasons can greatly affect a large state's economy. In response to the pressure of Los Angeles County's Air Pollution Control District and Governor Brown, the state legislature has provided that within varying time intervals all California cars, trucks and buses must be equipped with effective anti-smog devices. The bill is to be in force a year after a special board of the state Department of Health has certified at least two anti-smog devices. From that point on every new car sold within the state will have to be so equipped, while commercial vehicles already in use will be given two years, and private autos three, to comply with the new regulations.

A score of such devices already are in the process of development, including some by the Big Three car manufacturers. But if the law is to become an actuality the California state government will have to bestir itself. Qualified private laboratories can test the devices submitted at the behest and expense of the state, but a whole new series of inspection stations is needed, capable of measuring air-polluting exhaust fumes from older cars.

At present, Californians have some seven and a half million motor vehicles, far and away their principal means of daily transport. New car sales in the state average about two-thirds of a million a year. The market for these devices which is opening up is therefore a staggering one. The cheaper of the two types of anti-smog mechanisms is a chemical or catalytic one which operates at low or medium temperatures but which becomes ineffective because of lead saturation. As much of our present motor fuel contains lead, this is spurring a number of chemical companies, and the big oil corporations themselves, to strenuous efforts to produce a non-poisonable catalytic agent. Hence an effective public protest in California against physically irritating and harmful conditions is bringing about as a by-product sizable economic side-effects—all of which may spread to other states.

TO THE STUDENTS OF CHILE

IN HIS recent reply to the open letter of the Chilean students, President Eisenhower has expressed United States policy on several important issues affecting both North and South America. The letter of the Chilean students (a translation of which appeared in our April 8 issue) was polite and formal. But it also contained harsh criticisms of U.S. policy toward South America, suggested ways in which this policy should be modified, and singled out Cuba as a country that deserved more sympathy and aid than it was receiving from the United States.

The reply from President Eisenhower stressed those aspects of our policy to which the students directed attention. Most specifically it commented on present Cuban-United States relations. President Eisenhower recalled that the Chilean students had commended recent U.S. policy toward Cuba, but he pointed out that they had failed to mention present Cuban attitudes toward the U.S.

The President then called attention to the present exacerbated situation in Cuba, U.S. sympathy with proper land reform, U.S. investments in Cuba and U.S. attitudes toward intervention in the affairs of other countries. This reply, which will be studied throughout Latin America, will not by itself transform criticism of the U.S. into praise. Against the background of present U.S. attitudes toward Cuba, however, these words of the President must be effective. Still, the criticism and questions of the Chilean students are the legacy of many years. It will take many more years—and much work—before they will be fully answered.

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Packaged Wisdom

Even more disturbing than the confusion in the general education movement is its subtle anti-intellectualism

by RICHARD J. BERNSTEIN

THE PREVAILING fashion in our liberal arts colleges today is general education. There is scarcely a college in the country that doesn't have its own specially designed program to meet the needs of the modern student, and it would probably be difficult to find any two colleges with the same program. While it is probably true that the general education movement has brought its share of benefits to our colleges (though in light of the claims made for general education there is surprisingly little objective evidence to substantiate these claims), the dangers and anti-intellectual tendencies of this movement have been neglected.

As an identifiable movement, general education had its beginnings after World War I, though it is during the past two decades that it has enjoyed its boom period. It began as a reaction to the excesses of the free elective system which had been popularized by Charles Eliot during the last decades of the nineteenth century. When Eliot became president of Harvard in 1869, all freshman and a large part of sophomore, junior and senior courses were prescribed. Fifteen years later, all restrictions on the selection of courses were removed. With such an extreme laissez faire system, a student could study virtually whatever he wanted. At the same time, he could concentrate his studies in a specific corner of a specialized field and ignore the fundamentals of a liberally educated man.

General education is supposed to conteract this cafeteria and overspecialized approach to education. Nominally, it aims at providing the student with a basic grasp of the liberal arts and sciences for the purpose of giving him a broad foundation on which he can construct his specialized knowledge. But the popularity of general education cannot be explained simply as a reaction to over-specialization. It reflects the more basic problems and anxieties of our times. The advocates of general education have been worried about the breakdown of significant communication among educated men. They have been concerned about the way in which the university under the shield of "objectivity" is becoming an impersonal factory for knowledge-getting rather than an institution dedicated to fostering sound judgment and wisdom.

AS ONE reads through some of the hundreds of reports on general education which were prepared by dedicated faculties during the forties, it is extremely impressive to witness the concern and effort that went into planning an educational program for a mature post-war generation. A proposal for a new *freshman* philosophy course at one of our more conservative ivy league colleges catches something of the earnest mood, the ambitiousness and the downright pretentiousness of these reports:

"The course undertakes to indicate and deal with the questions that arise from the moment one starts considering the relation of man to his universe, e.g., the reasons for believing or not believing that the sum of things is ruled by chance, mind, or personality; the question of reality, what is really real; the question of knowledge—how the knower knows, in how far his knowledge is valid; the various kinds of knowing, scientific, poetic, artistic, religious, etc. The philosopher will recognize in this the matter of metaphysics but he will also recognize that it differs from such courses as usually offered. And it differs still further in the important fact that it is taught with an eye constantly on what the student is acquiring in his other courses impinging on his work in natural science, mathematics and his understanding of western history. Here is an opportunity not to bring about a millennium but to move a little closer to it by a radical experiment; i.e., an experiment which tries to get back to roots."

When one surveys the concrete results of these reports, the chaotic array of "special" programs and

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gimmicks in our colleges, and the jargon and loose talk which surround discussions of general education, one cannot help wondering what exactly went wrong. We flatter ourselves with the myth of experimentation, but anyone who has participated in setting up a general education program knows what a great part whim and caprice play. We become victims of our vague generalities and clichés which fill the college catalogues. What is labeled "experimental" (a favorite term of educators and editors of college catalogues) is usually restless innovation with little attempt at control or serious evaluation. What is called "vital diversity" is frequently nothing but sheer confusion.

For example, both St. John's College at Annapolis and The General College of the University of Minnesota pride themselves as leaders in the field of general education, yet it would be difficult to imagine how two colleges could be any more different. At St. John's, the backbone of the curriculum is a set selection of the Great Books. Every student studies Greek, German and French. Little concession is made toward orientating courses to everyday "life activities." Minnesota's General College describes its courses in the familiar jargon of general education as follows: "Because they are not merely introductions to later, more specialized, courses in the same field, they are broad in range rather than narrow. Emphasis is placed on the understanding of basic principles and applications as well as on subject matter content." But when one actually turns to a description of the courses offered, it is discovered that courses "broad in range" include "15. Clothing Selection, Purchase, and Care (3 cred.) and "27. Introduction to Leisure-Time Activities."

EVEN MORE disturbing than the confusion in general education is that this movement, which is supposed to counter anti-intellectual tendencies in undergraduate education, contains a more subtle and pernicious form of anti-intellectualism. As practiced, it frequently fosters false illusions, encourages superficial and careless thinking, and develops a disdain toward rigor and precision.

In establishing general education programs, it has been commonly assumed that the departmental structure of the university is not a sufficient guide for designing courses. (Life does not fall into the convenient categories of history, physics, psychology, etc.) The most common rubric for general education courses has been humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, though it is deceiving to think that this indicates any basic agreement, for the actual contents of these courses vary greatly from college to college. The rationale for this broader division is that the student will become acquainted with the basic orientations of human knowledge. In practice, these courses usually are a potpourri of assorted texts, and encourage bad intellectual habits. The student is expected to make generalizations about the Greek way of life, or the relation between psychology and literature, without having the knowledge and discipline to make intelligent generalizations.

It is not uncommon to hear liberal arts students glibly discourse about "the nature of science" in a way in which no responsible scientist would ever talk. What is most disturbing is that a hoax is being perpetrated. The student gets the idea that he can have a general knowledge of something without knowing anything specific. He is also led to believe that the reason why the university is divided into separate faculties and departments is because of some accident of administration, and thereby underestimates the extent to which this division has been necessitated by the development of a body of information, skills and criteria required for intelligent understanding of different areas of knowledge.

The emphasis on integration also leads to superficiality. How many lectures have begun with something like the following, "We cannot hope to understand the Renaissance image of man in fifty minutes, *but* . . . ." After a while, the keen student learns to discount the antecedent and to imitate the lecturer in doing what he says he cannot hope to do. And though he is reassured that it is impossible, he is expected to write the same type of papers. Again, a false image is reinforced in the student's mind.

In describing the principle for evaluating the humanities program of the University of Louisville, Professors Hassold and Kain have written: "It is universal, all-inclusive, able to assign to each contribution to culture its right place and the proper displacement in the complete scheme of cultural life as it has unfolded from the prehistoric to the present day." This architectonic metaphor of knowledge where everything has its proper place is clearly outdated, yet it lurks behind very many general education programs. We seem to be afraid of admitting that our knowledge is indeed fragmentary and defies simple classification. A more appropriate metaphor is suggested by Oppenheimer when he speaks of science as a house without a plan, a "house so vast that none of us knows it, and even the most fortunate have seen most rooms only from the outside or by a fleeting passage."

Whitehead's description of the rhythm of education also provides an excellent perspective for seeing exactly what is wrong with general education as it is practiced. He analyzes the rhythm of education into three stages: romance, precision, and generalization. Romance is the stage of first apprehension, the stirring of the mind and the excitement aroused with the initial discovery of new possibilities and vistas. It must be followed by a stage of precision in which exactness of

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formulation, the learning of skills, and disciplined thought, transform and deepen our initial understanding. The final stage of generalization "is a return to romanticism with the added advantage of classified ideas and relevant techniques." The educational process consists of the repetition and overlapping of this threefold cycle. The stages are interdependent; romance without precision becomes diffuse and sentimental, precision without romance can become disorganized and an unprofitable collection of data and miscellaneous skills, and generalization without precision and romance is impossible.

THE CHIEF fallacy of general education programs is that they mistake romance for intelligent generalization, and de-emphasize the importance of precision. They encourage the student to think of precision as sheer pedantry, instead of a necessary stage for generalization. We constantly talk about stimulating the student, and capturing his imagination, as if this were an end-in-itself. We deliberately prolong the adolescence of the student.

This tendency is even evidenced in the titles of general education courses. Though it is a favorite pose of the academic to decry the influence of Madison Avenue, he has become a master of its best techniques. It is prosaic to study history of philosophy. It must be something exciting, like "History of the Idea of Good and Evil" or " Observation, Interpretation and Integration." It must also be all-inclusive without looking extremely superficial. At Oklahoma A. and M., the humanities course covers "the development of Western culture from Homer to the present" in which, for example, four weeks are dedicated to the Twentieth Century with "one lecture on each of the following: fiction, drama, poetry, architecture, painting, music, and the dance."

The effect of general education ideology on upperclass courses is also disturbing. Though originally restricted to the first two years of college study, there has recently been an increase of special programs for upperclassmen modeled after general education courses. Why study history or English when you can get the wide sweep of things in History of Arts and Letters? The greatest abuse of this new type of program is illustrated in many of the American studies programs which are springing up all over the country and are supposed by state legislators and wealthy alumni. An undergraduate who knows little or nothing of history, literature, economics and politics, no longer has to learn anything well in order to see how all these are related in American culture. American studies is rapidly becoming the way out for the student who isn't really serious about studying anything.

One of the standard justifications for general education is that an educated man ought to know something about his intellectual heritage and be acquainted with fields beyond his own special interests. Sometimes the spokesmen of general education argue as if they are the only ones interested in this goal. Education, insofar as it is sound, will encourage this development; no special program has a monopoly on it. The truth is that general education programs too often work against such a goal. The student is told in the catalogue that this special program will provide him with a broad base before beginning his specialized training and will take care of his general education needs. But this is an illusion. A truly liberal or general education is not something confined to a set of "well-planned" courses during the first two years of college. It must be going on all the time, in and out of the classroom. One thinks of Whitehead who, though he did not formally study philosophy as an undergraduate, tells us that he practically knew Kant by heart from the discussion of his fellow students. No program can be a surrogate for the ongoing process of independent learning. To create the impression, as is so frequently done, that there is a short-cut to this end via some general education courses, is to mislead the student.

AMONG faculty members, too, in the general education program, there are distressing signs of anti-intellectualism. An enormous amount of man-hours are spent in committees whose function is to plan, administer and re-examine general education programs. Though faculties complain of the burdens of teaching, there is no end to their ingenuity in forming new committees, the value of which is extremely dubious. They are models of waste and inefficiency, meeting regularly whether or not there is a warrant, and they often degenerate into high-class bull sessions. Every time a new program is started there is a vast amount of bureaucratic machinery set into motion. And instructors are not saddled with these committees against their will: they are the diversion of the mediocre.

One might think that faculties would call a halt to the vagaries and mushrooming of special programs for the protection of their own integrity. Their hesitancy to do so is, in part, influenced by the economic dependency of our colleges. The large and growing amount of money which is being poured into our institutions of higher learning by private businesses and foundations has been a mixed blessing. It is rare that money will be given for such a straightforward purpose as strengthening the teaching of English, psychology, or Greek. The grants go to the "experimental" programs, and our colleges have readily obliged by offering variations on variations. Many a department can greatly increase its size and influence by participating in programs supported by non-departmental funds. The temptation has been great and

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both administrators and chairmen have succumbed, for it seems to be a cardinal principle never to turn down a grant. But as this involvement in programs increases, a greater proportion of faculty time and energy is wasted in unprofitable peripheral matters.

On paper, courses like these represent a "pooling of effort" or the "cooperative results of a community of scholars." But underlying these clichés there is the false assumption that the more people involved in designing and teaching a course, the better the course. In practice, teachers are often required to teach where they lack both competence and interest.

There is, of course, much that is worthwhile in general education. The goal of providing the type of education which will provide an educated man with a sound understanding of his intellectual heritage is admirable. In many cases, the enthusiasm for general education has led to better instruction, smaller and more intensive seminars, and more interesting undergraduate courses. But we need a greater awareness that educators have been taken in by their own slogans and have caught the disease of superficiality and flashiness which they are trying to cure.

Greater self-examination and self-evaluation are needed to clear up the confusion and flabbiness of general education programs. It is time that we learned a lesson that we should have learned long ago, that in our quest for the right program, whether it is elective, progressive or general, we can easily lose sight of the basic and obvious education fact: that ultimately the quality of an education is dependent on having the best students and faculty, not on slick techniques.

A QUESTIONABLE TREND

The Student Loyalty Oath

by EUGENE J. McCARTHY

THE NATIONAL Defense Education Act of 1958 requires a loyalty oath from those who apply for loans and an affidavit disclaiming belief in any organization which advocates overthrowing the Government by unconstitutional means, or their support of any such organization. A proposal to modify the loyalty oath provision of the Act is again moving through the committees of Congress.

Last year Senator Kennedy brought to the floor of the Senate an amendment which would have repealed both the oath and the affidavit. Speaking for his committee, he accepted on the floor of the Senate an amendment restoring the affirmative loyalty oath. However, even this modified proposal was rejected by the Senate.

Now again the opposing lines are being drawn. On the one side are various veterans' groups, patriotic societies and individuals who argue that no one should hesitate to take a positive oath of allegiance to the country, and that no loyal young American should hesitate to declare his anti-Communism. On the other hand, there are those opposed, including some spokesmen for the Administration, presidents of colleges and universities, professors, and others who argue that both the oath and affidavit are unnecessary, ineffective, or discriminatory. The middle ground between these two positions is also occupied. In this area are those who for the most part are willing to accept the positive oath of allegiance, but are strongly opposed to the disclaimer affidavit.

To me the central issue in this controversy seems to be not one of loyalty or of security, but rather one of propriety.

No one can seriously believe that the basic security of the nation will be drastically affected either by the continuation of the oath and disclaimer, by modification of them, or by removing them completely from the law. Certainly, no convinced Communist would hesitate to swear falsely. On the other hand, no one can prove that the integrity of the academic community will be destroyed if the oath and disclaimer are retained in the law. Our educational system is strong; students and educators are resilient; students have demonstrated that they can stand effectively against faculties; faculties seem to survive despite administrations; administrations seem to survive despite the regents, as in the case of state universities; boards of regents seem to survive despite state legislatures. All have had to put up with many difficult and disagreeable things.

What is called for in this matter is judgment on the part of Congress as to whether or not the general welfare of the country has been protected or advanced by the inclusion of the oath or affidavit in the National Defense Education Act. There are several general principles which must be considered here.

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FIRST, it is important that the history of the nature of oath-taking be considered. The taking of an oath in Western civilization has always been considered as important. It has been an act of great religious as well as civil significance, and the use of the oath has generally been restricted to serious decisions.

Traditionally, oath-taking has been surrounded with formal ritual, reflecting the solemnity of the occasion and the importance of the act both to the individual who took the oath and also to the community in the service of which it was taken. The oath taken by the President, the Vice-President, the members of Congress, the judges of the courts, members of the armed services is a sign and public manifestation that they are making a serious decision; that they are performing a very special kind of act of dedication to the public welfare. It shows that they are taking up vital work of the community. The oath is a reminder to them of the importance of their responsibility, and it is also a public declaration to the people of the country that they are accepting these very special responsibilities.

The fundamental sanction of the oath is the name of God. It is not an unrelated declaration to say that no man should take the name of the Lord in vain.

Oath-taking loses something of its significance and of its dignity and, I think, too, something of its effectiveness if it is used commonly or lightly, without preparation, without due cause, without adequate ceremony. The dignity of the oath is lowered when an oath is used in a routine manner, as a mere step in the paper work of making a loan. The oath should not be taken without reflection, without identification with public service. We should go slowly in extending oath-taking to cover minor relationships of the state and its citizens. But making a loan to a student to enable him to go to college is essentially a personal financial contract. It is my opinion that such action taken alone does not merit the dignity of an oath such as is now required in the National Defense Education Act. This proposal comes very close to putting a cash value on patriotism.

THE SECOND principle which has bearing on this decision is fundamental to democratic society and democratic government. Democracy implies an affirmation of confidence in the integrity and responsibility of the individual person. In a democracy it is assumed that an individual is innocent of crime unless he is proven guilty. As far as his general acts as a citizen are concerned, it should be assumed that he is loyal until he has been proved to be other than loyal.

Democratic government acknowledges that the individual has personal responsibilities; that he has certain unalienable rights inherent in his nature as a man, and because of this nature, he must be given a measure of freedom and also a measure of responsibility for self-discipline which is outside the power of any group or any institution, including the state. There is a place for loyalty oaths and for oaths of allegiance in democratic society, but such an oath should not be presented ordinarily in a negative context, but rather as a proud and public affirmation of dedication to duty.

The record of history shows quite clearly that it has been the tyrannies—the tyrannical governments, the absolute monarchs, the totalitarian states—those governments which were most uncertain of themselves or which were on the verge of collapse that have made oath-taking a rigid, common, if not universal, requirement. In our own generation we need go back only to the Nazi period in Germany. Under that regime every time a citizen of Germany met another citizen on the street, he was expected to raise his hand in salute and say, "Heil Hitler." This was an oath of allegiance or at least a declaration of his allegiance to Hitler and to the Nazi movement. Certainly this was not evidence of a vital living society, of a society made up of free men, but rather it was a sign of uncertainty, of hesitation and of fear.

Basically, these are the considerations that are involved in the current debate; not in the same degree, of course, but certainly in substance. For the absolute monarch and for the tyrant, oath-taking becomes a device to harass, to threaten and to control citizens. Loyalty oaths of this kind are no real contribution to the security of a nation of free men, but rather a manifestation of insecurity reflecting a fear of government officials and others who seek to intimidate and frighten others and thus to reassure themselves.

I do not suggest that the loyalty oath in the National Defense Education Act is of this order. If it could be isolated, it might well be said to be insignificant, but there is danger that it will establish a trend which will not do honor to democracy or to the traditions of the United States. To extend a requirement for loyalty oaths to more and more relationships which are relatively unimportant or which are personal or which are socially insignificant is to run the danger of undermining our traditions and at the same time of destroying confidence in democratic government and in democratic institutions.

This danger was recognized in the very beginning of our nation. I am sure that Thomas Jefferson would not have been happy at the prospect of imposing loyalty oaths on students seeking loans to enter the University of Virginia when that institution was established, for he said that he regarded it as "based on the inimitable freedom of the human mind. For here," he said, "we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate error so long as reason is

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free to combat it." And following the Revolution, even the conservative Alexander Hamilton opposed the expurgatory oath which was designed to weed out the Tories in New York. Hamilton said that this oath would have the following effect: "To excite the honest and conscientious and to hold out a bribe to perjury. . . . Nothing could be more repugnant to the true genius of the common law than such an inquisition . . . in the conscience of men."

There is an interesting report on the matter of oath-taking in Clarendon's *The Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*. According to this history, in the year 1639 when King Charles was proceeding against the Scots, it was proposed that all members of the English nobility make a special protestation of their loyalty and obedience to the King and disclaim and renounce any intelligence or correspondence with the rebels. Two members of the English nobility, Lord Say and Lord Brook, refused to profess their loyalty to the King. They said, "If the king suspected their loyalty, he might proceed against them as he thought fit; but that it was against the law to impose any oath or protestation upon them which were not enjoined by the law; and, in that respect, that they might not betray the common liberty, they would not submit to it."

FINALLY, I think the decision on this question should take into account the principle that professional groups generally should govern their own members. Just as we assume that in a democracy every citizen will be loyal, so too we expect each profession to determine its own goals and to adopt its own procedures and rules for disciplining its own members. Sound democracy reserves the authority of government intervention only to those cases in which the common good is clearly threatened by failures by other groups or institutions.

We expect, for example, that the American Medical Association will promote medicine without government threat and that its members will abide by the Hippocratic oath and the other standards of the profession. It is common practice to permit the Bar Association to determine rules for admission and rules for practice and to discipline its own members. Each one who is admitted to the practice of medicine or of the law or to the other professions pledges faithful performance of his duties; indeed, the word *profession* itself is drawn from the action of *professing* or of taking an oath publicly.

The academic profession in turn has its own goals and its own responsibilities. Colleges and universities have a common purpose; namely, to help students seek and acquire truth. Each institution has its unique traditions and objectives. A student when he enters a college or university makes an implicit pledge of fidelity to the purpose of the University. If he does not adhere to its standards, he is likely either to withdraw or he is subject to expulsion. As a student, his professional responsibility is the concern of the college, and college authorities are expected to keep him aligned through a variety of efforts not excluding an appeal for loyalty to the "crimson," or to the "blue," or to the "maroon and gold," as the case may be.

Of course, it might be well if the very act of entering upon the work of gaining a college education were made an occasion of great public significance, and a public declaration of dedication called for. It might be desirable that all students who enter college take such an oath to remind them of the special social significance and social responsibility that go with education and to stir them to more solemn dedication to the fulfillment of the responsibilities that go with learning. But this is not the loyalty oath of the National Defense Education Act.

For the government to intervene in the professional controls now exercised in our colleges and to take steps which purport to guarantee loyalty of students requires substantial evidence that the colleges have failed in self-discipline. I do not believe that the proponents of the loyalty oath have seriously questioned the loyalty of the academic community, faculty or students, nor do they declare that in fact any pattern of disloyalty actually exists. To my mind, the available evidence argues for continued confidence in the ability and integrity of teachers and administrations and also of American college students. I firmly believe that the basic issue here is really one of the propriety of oath-taking, of respect for the traditions of this nation, and of the fundamental demands of democracy.

The Story of Balaam's Ass

I like to think sometimes of Balaam's ass.
She had more sense than her ambitious lord
who could not see the danger in the pass
when the stern angel met them with a sword.
Balaam had learning; was an eminent seer.
He looked before and after and between
with such profound discernment it was clear
that what he could not see could not be seen.
And yet, the donkey saw the angel's wrath
when Balaam only saw what he could see.
With kicks and blows he urged her to the path
and thereby shares the immortality
of that delightful beast who lives to fame
because of her sagacious tongue and eye.
Although anonymous, she shares the name
of the great prophet doomed in shame to die.
He uttered marvels, but he missed their glory.
Better to be the donkey in this story.

SISTER MARIS STELLA.

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Reading in Our Colleges

by DONALD W. MILLER

THE FIRST round of the great debate over Catholic colleges is ended, and all the principal speakers have paused for breath. Perhaps this is the proper time to suggest that when the debate resumes, as I trust it will, it should start off in a new direction. The results of the debate thus far can be summed up as follows: most of us agree that Catholic intellectual life in this country is not nearly so rich and vigorous as it should be, and that our colleges are somehow largely responsible for this situation.

No doubt this admission has cleared the air, but it is still too general to be very useful. Our teachers and administrators have a right to know precisely what they are supposed to *do* about the situation. The time has come to point to specific shortcomings in our schools, and preferably to those that are within our present power to correct. With this intention I offer the following discussion, based on experiences that are personal but, I fear, not at all unusual.

I attended a medium-size Jesuit college. Perhaps it was not the typical Jesuit college, and perhaps the last few years have brought great changes, but it was and is considered to be several cuts above a great many other Catholic colleges. Although not one of our best-known Catholic schools, the one I attended has been in business for a long time, and it prides itself on giving a solid liberal arts education. After receiving my A.B. degree, not many years ago, I entered a leading graduate school to continue my study of English literature. I quickly discovered that I was ill-prepared for graduate study, and I began to wonder what had gone wrong during my undergraduate years. I finally concluded that my college had failed me badly in at least one respect: it had not required me to read enough. Several of my graduate school classmates had attended prominent Eastern colleges, and each of them had been required to read a great deal more in college than I had.

But I have promised to be specific. My freshman year in college consisted of courses in English composition, Latin, French, history, and religion. In English class we read a couple of lightweight books each semester in order to write reports on them, and a few essays as models for our writing. No reading was required in either of the language courses. The history course was a survey of ancient, medieval and modern history, but the only reading assigned was in the textbook. The religion course had two textbooks, one for each semester, but no further reading was ever suggested. Total reading for the first year: parts of three textbooks, some four slight "report" books chosen at random from a miscellaneous list, and a smattering of essays.

SO FAR as I knew at that time, all colleges had pretty much the same freshman program. Now I know differently. Let's look at the program of one well-known Eastern college. In this school the typical freshman takes English composition, French or German, and either mathematics or a science—three courses at least equal in difficulty to my English, Latin, and French. In addition he takes two very demanding reading courses. The first concentrates on political, social and economic thought, and the student reads sizable chunks of Aristotle, Aquinas, Machiavelli, More, Calvin, Hobbes, Rousseau, and many other thinkers. The second, a humanities course, requires him to read major works by Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius, Vergil, Augustine, Dante, Rabelais, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Milton, Hume, Molière, Swift, Voltaire, Goethe, and Dostoevsky.

By the end of the freshman year my counterpart at this college had a considerable reading edge on me and my classmates. Even if he had stopped there we would never have caught up, but for him this was only the beginning. The next three years of his program were equally demanding. Of course he did not fully understand all the books he read. Do any of us? But at least he spent four years straining to understand, and he was constantly in the presence of greatness.

Meanwhile, what was happening at my college? The survey of English literature was required of all sophomores, and our reading was done entirely in a two-volume anthology. Since the anthology contained no novels, we read no novels. Since it had no play by Shakespeare, we read no play by Shakespeare. At the end of the year those students who had not chosen to major or minor in English parted company with the department, their literary education completed.

Despite this unpromising introduction, however, I elected to major in English. In the next two years I took an assortment of courses, a couple of them

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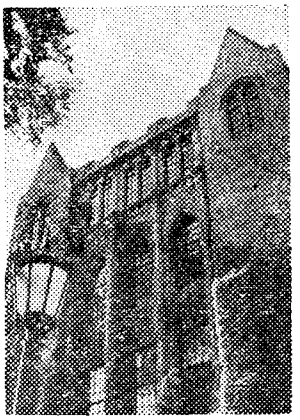

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required, the rest elective. Because I chose no course dealing with the English novel, I was never required to read a single English novel. Because "English literature" meant just that, no one ever so much as suggested I read Homer, Dante, Cervantes, Goethe, or Tolstoy.

All students were required to take three years of philosophy. Presumably we were studying Thomism, yet only once, in a senior ethics course, were we required to read any of St. Thomas's writings, and then only a couple of articles from the *Summa*. We were never asked to read any other philosopher. We read textbooks, or the instructor's notes.

My minor was history, and here the story was much the same. In a year of American history we never strayed beyond the text. I went through courses in the Reformation and the French Revolution without reading a word from either of these periods, except for an occasional sentence quoted in our trusty textbooks. In my senior year I had a professor who made me go to the library and read some "original sources," but he was an eccentric who soon left the college.

In four years at a Catholic college I was never asked to read a single chapter of the Bible.

Of course I was free during all this time to read on my own, and I did. But I could have done that in the public library at home. I had come to college for guidance in my reading. I needed to be told what to read, and in what order. Since nobody seemed at all interested in telling me, I simply browsed through the library shelves, choosing interesting titles, often wasting time.

Furthermore, like most undergraduates, I needed to be prodded. The campus is so full of distractions, and the undergraduate dedication to learning is so inconstant, that in general the student does no more than is required of him. (For this reason I have emphasized the idea of "requirement" in the preceding discussion.) If he is grade-conscious, he does what he must do to get an "A," but at my college even that was not much.

AS I look back on all this now, I find it difficult to believe. But it did happen to me and to all of my classmates, and I suspect that something very similar happens in many Catholic colleges. Is it any wonder that comparatively few of our graduates distinguish themselves intellectually? Is it surprising that after four years of reading virtually nothing but textbooks the Catholic college student should not decide to devote himself to a lifetime of scholarship?

A great many of our colleges seem to have lost sight of a basic principle: what the student learns, at least in the humanities, depends almost entirely on what he reads. I do not mean to minimize the role of lectures and class discussions, but lectures and discussions presuppose wide reading. The instructor can guide the student by arousing his interest in reading,

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suggesting books for him to read, providing background information, pointing out relationships, and helping him solve problems he encounters in reading. If the student reads widely, he will find these aids invaluable. If he does not, the instructor's efforts will be largely wasted. The books, not the lectures, are the meat of the course, and the instructor is there to act as a guide to readers.

If a student is going to learn anything about literature, for instance, he will have to read literature. He cannot depend on hearing about it, even from brilliant instructors, or on reading about it. He will have to read novels, even if his anthology does not contain any. (Surely in this age of paperbacks the books he needs will be available and inexpensive.) He will have to read Dante, Goethe, Tolstoy, and the others, even if they are not a part of "English literature," even if he must read them in translation. He will have to read and read and read.

Our colleges face staggering practical difficulties, and there I do not have any solutions to offer. I do not know how we are going to improve our faculties or our libraries when we have scarcely enough money to meet present expenses. There are so many things we would like to do and cannot. But we can take one simple step that will revolutionize our schools. We can start making our students read.

EASTER: VIGIL, DAWN, DAY

This is the night for shepherds watching flocks
(Silent the sly spring breeze in the dark;
Explicit the light on the dim tremendous fields).

This is the time for Wise Men finding gifts
(West to their east: from his setting, the Sun
Blooms gold in His rising and draws from the earth
Frankincense and myrrh and sudden splendid delights
For Wise Men and fools).

This is the day for bruised dead Stephen's joy
And Becket's brightness in the dark cathedral aisle,
For Holy Children and a silvered gaunt tall man
With lightnings tearing colors in his dreams,
For old Sylvester with the triple crown,
The Wise Men's kinsman and their flowering pride,
For shy vague Anastasia, clear-lighted in this latter dawn of fire.

This is the night, and this the dawn;
This is the day when blood ran gold,
When dead men's laughs were warm,
Thorns bloomed,
And fructifying winds upon the earth
Were sweet beyond compare.

JOHN HAZARD WILDMAN.

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A Question of Survival

by BRENDAN DOWNEY

A FEW weeks ago college administrators flocked to Boston to discuss the question: "Will the colleges of liberal arts and sciences survive?" The consensus of the Boston meeting seemed to be that the liberal arts colleges, which is what most small Catholic Colleges call themselves, are a "good thing," but that their survival in this pragmatic age of efficiency and centralization will depend upon the quality of the produce. And this in turn will depend on the conservation and judicious management of the present resources of the colleges and the finding of vastly greater financial support. In short, a close correlation is posited between academic excellence and plentiful supplies of money.

The Catholic colleges have been striving mightily to improve themselves academically, especially since the spanking they received at the hands of Monsignor Ellis, Father Cunningham and others in the past three years. They have become conscious of Woodrow Wilson Fellowships and other awards for outstanding academic work. They are placing new emphasis on faculty research and publication of results. They are conducting self-studies and comparing the achievement of their students with that of other college students through such objective standards as the College Record Examination. They are becoming more highly selective in admission and are promoting "honors programs" and other special incentives for the gifted.

Economically, however, the Catholic colleges are still having a struggle. The small Catholic college is traditionally poverty-stricken, and the reason for this poverty is not far to seek. The Catholic population in the past has consisted largely of workers, farmers, and salaried employees who simply could not afford the kind of support for their colleges that other private colleges have received. Their difficulty has been greatly complicated by the need for building and maintaining a vast system of Catholic elementary and secondary schools. The very existence of this far-reaching system is a tribute to the willingness of American Catholics to make sacrifices for religious education, but the Catholic colleges have managed to survive mainly through the sacrifices of the religious and clerical teachers and, more recently, the sacrifices of increasing numbers of lay instructors.

With the growth in economic status of the Catholic population, however, and with the rapid increase in numbers of Catholic college graduates, the prospect for financial support is not altogether dim. The public relations experts maintain that the Catholic colleges have barely scratched the surface in enlisting public support for the public service they are offering. Also, the funds obtained from student fees in the past have borne little relationship to the value of the services rendered. The desire of Catholic educators to afford a college training to as many deserving students as possible and their concern about pricing themselves out of the market have placed severe limitations on what the colleges could charge. The avalanche of applications in the past several years, however, has enabled the small Catholic colleges to raise their fees to something like the proportion of actual educational costs paid in other private colleges. This proportion of total costs in private colleges generally ranges from forty-five to sixty-five per cent. The remainder in the non-Catholic colleges must come from endowments or gifts, while in the small Catholic colleges it can usually be supplied by the contributed services of religious. Since inflation is constantly shrinking the value of endowments, and since the value of contributed services is constantly rising with the rising salary scales of instructors, the small Catholic college would seem to be attaining a more favorable financial position.

BUT the problem of efficient use of resources and facilities is one that the small Catholic colleges certainly need to give greater attention. They must face the very thorny question of what is optimum enrollment for a particular college. Surveys have been made which indicate that the smaller the college the fewer hours per week will classroom and laboratories actually be in use. The smaller the college, also, the less likelihood of economically justifiable numbers in upper division courses taught by the higher priced instructors. In addition, the general poverty of the smaller college has made it necessary for some of the personnel to try to take care of half a dozen different jobs—instructor, administrator, counsellor, disciplinarian, placement officer, etc. A great economy could be practiced in many cases by employing efficient personnel trained for these various tasks and leaving the actual academic staff free for more economically valuable intellectual work.

The problem of personnel is not an easy one in most of the colleges. In addition to the fact that the small

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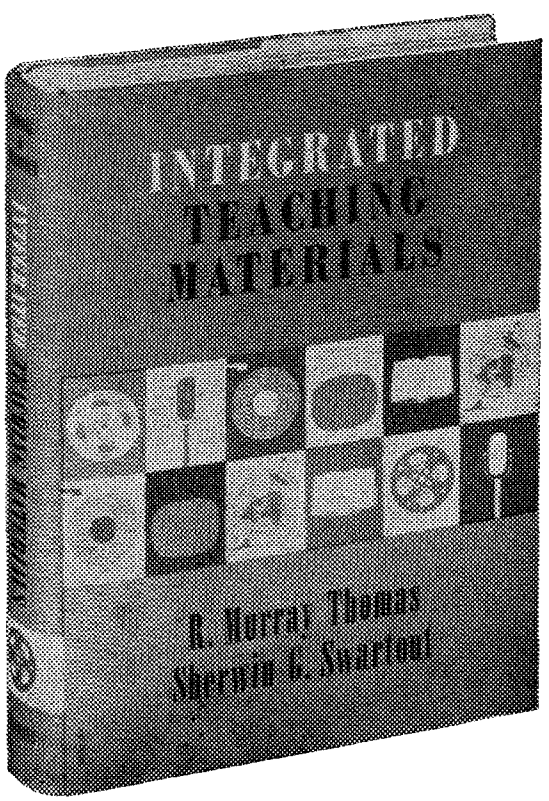
Catholic colleges have had a rather poor record in salary standards, where the lay faculty are in a small minority the tendency has been to give them a kind of second-class status, as hired help without any real voice in college affairs. However, those colleges which are finding it necessary to increase their lay staff are developing respectable salary scales and personnel policies through sheer force of circumstance, and the result is good for all concerned.

The lay instructor in such schools is given a sense of security and a feeling of participation which allow him to exercise the kind of influence on the student body which only he can give. His very presence is evidence to the student that one need not necessarily be a religious in order to pursue the academic life, an illusion under which Catholic youth have labored in the past. College administrations are realizing the value of the dedicated lay scholar also in providing a standard for the religious faculty, who sometimes fall into an uninspired routine because their status and security do not depend upon continued intellectual achievement. In addition, the acceptance of the layman as a permanent part of the faculty enables the young religious to be assigned to the kind of work and academic field for which he has special talent rather than being forced by circumstances into a field for which he is not particularly suited.

But by far the greatest need for the small Catholic college is to make up its mind what it is trying to do. Catholics have suffered from the same confusion of aims that has been characteristic of the American educational system, as well as from some special confusions of their own. In order to keep up with the Joneses, the Catholic colleges have felt it necessary not only to conduct fantastically expensive athletic programs, but to provide technical training in various fields for the practical-minded students who assume that the sole object of college education is to provide them the means of making money.

Furthermore, the Catholic colleges emphasize the importance of the right kind of education in order to save one's soul and to form apostles to save the souls of others. Education for saving one's soul seems to mean primarily training in the moral virtues, and education for the apostolate seems to mean training in philosophical and theological polemics. The pursuit of truth for its own sake according to the ideal of Cardinal Newman has not penetrated the Catholic consciousness to any noticeable degree.

I HASTEN to add that I think the Catholic college *ought* to be concerned with the financial security and the spiritual advancement of its students. When these considerations, however, are substituted for the



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primary aim of any self-respecting institution of higher learning—a quest for knowledge as its own end and the development of the critical intelligence to its highest potential—no very high intellectual goal is likely to be achieved. By the same token, since the primary aim of the liberal arts college is the perfection of the intellect, the neglect of this aim by those who have committed themselves to it professionally is not likely to be pleasing to God or conducive to sanctity. Faculties and students who are content with intellectual mediocrity or with academic performance at less than capacity are guilty of a grave betrayal of the God-given gift of intellect. Thus, spiritual perfection must be pursued in college, not in spite of, but *by means of* the cultivation of the mind.

This question of learning how to make money is of lesser concern. It seems obvious enough that the man who develops his mind to its utmost capacity is best qualified to make money in the long run.

Another major obstacle of the Catholic colleges is a certain spirit of timidity, approaching at times to anxiety neurosis. We are afraid to allow young men and women to pursue certain areas of investigation for fear they will be led to dangerous conclusions. This is true not only in the realms of natural science, anthropology, and sociology, but even in philosophy, theology, history and literature. We have been shaken by the defections of certain great scholars of the past, and the nineteenth-century heresy of modernism—as well as the eminent scientists who have denied God—has made us lose our nerve.

Whatever be the value of the policy of caution, it will never appeal to the young, and it will never appeal at any age to a man passionately devoted to the pursuit of truth. In addition, it is a betrayal of our own Catholic heritage. The common use of memorized formulas to avoid the painful process of thinking about contemporary problems is not (please God) in the great Catholic tradition of Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas. The great discoveries of philosophy and science were given birth by the splendid intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church; these things are ours by right, and we turn our backs on them only to the irreparable loss of the Church itself.

We need to restore our own confidence in the Faith that has been given us and in the God-like faculties that we have received to make use of it. We profess to believe that God is One, that God is Truth and that Truth is One. We need have no fear of any scientific or philosophical discovery, because it is certain to lead us ultimately to the divine source of truth.

If the small Catholic college is to survive, it must, then, face up to its formidable problems of finance and management, but also, and most importantly, to the responsibilities imposed by its own great intellectual tradition.

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THE SCREEN

TAKING APARTHEID APART

AS TIMELY as anything on our screens today is "Come Back, Africa," a fictional-documentary film made in the Union of South Africa by Lionel Rogosin, the American producer-director who had already proved the effectiveness of his candid camera technique in his Skid Row portrait in "On the Bowery." In Johannesburg and its environs, ostensibly to make a musical travelogue, Rogosin had to shoot much of his picture secretly. The hero is played by Zachariah, a non-professional actor whose story somewhat resembles the story of the character he is portraying.

A native farmer coming to work in the gold mines outside Johannesburg, he finds the life lonely and the pay too little to support his wife and children in Zululand. When he succeeds in getting a pass to the city, he is further disillusioned by losing a series of jobs (as house boy, car washer, hotel waiter, road-gang laborer) through the unreasonableness of his white employers.

Audiences expecting the slick perfection of a Hollywood movie in "Come Back, Africa" won't find it in this disturbing drama of racial conflict; but they will discover an intense sincerity and a series of realistic sequences illustrating the injustice, indeed the immorality, of South Africa's frustrating policy of apartheid. Unfortunately these scenes are loosely strung together, and too often the viewer doesn't know where he is or what the plot is leading up to. The story itself wanders and at times seems contrived in its concentration on nasty Afrikaners and childishly naive natives. But the cumulative effect is extremely forceful. And the scenes of Zachariah and his family in their squalid shack, of his meeting with friends to discuss their problems, of the vehement finale in which he breaks up everything in sight in frustrated fury—these and other equally moving scenes speak with eloquent power against the wrongs which still exist in South Africa.

THAT AMERICANS have small cause to be proud of their handling of racial conflicts is obvious. This theme is once again developed in a movie dealing with the lack of understanding and dignity in relations between white settlers and Indians. Unfortunately "The Unforgiven" is a pretentious film with a starry cast, lush color photography of the great outdoors and arty theatrical touches, all of which detract from the main theme. Set in the Texas Panhandle shortly

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after the Civil War, the picture is principally concerned with the hatred between the frontier folk and the Kiowa Indians. This hatred is stirred up anew by a crackpot avenger-on-horseback (Joseph Wiseman) who spreads the hateful truth that the daughter (Audrey Hepburn) of one of the settler families (Lillian Gish as the mother, Burt Lancaster, Audie Murphy and Doug McClure as her sons) is not really her daughter but a full-blooded Indian.

The script, written by Ben Maddow from Alan Le May's novel, concentrates on mystery and folksiness at first. It is rather slow about introducing the real theme, but once it's done, all hell breaks loose. The settlers turn against Audrey and her family; one of her brothers leaves in horror and disgust; and the Indians, demanding the return of the girl who was stolen as a baby, start open warfare. All of this places Burt, who had been displaying more than a little affection for his little "sister," in an extremely awkward position.

Can he now declare his love or should he feel distant from this Indian maiden brought up by his mother? Audrey helps him make up his mind by standing by the family when they are besieged by the Kiowa in a series of vicious attacks and by killing the half-breed (John Saxon) who was interested in her. The cast (which also includes Charles Bickford, June Walker, Albert Salmi) is well enough directed, but director John Huston seems never sure of the point the story is trying to make. His individual scenes are often moving; but even *many* good separate scenes do not make a unified work. "The Unforgiven" as a whole is too ineffectual and diffuse.

THE BEST thing to be said for "I Passed for White" is that it states well the ambiguous and painful position of a white-skinned Negro who is accepted by neither Negroes nor whites. A young Negro girl from Los Angeles, who has one white grandparent, decides to solve her unhappy situation by going to New York and passing as white. But she builds her hopes on a pack of lies and pretense, and when she marries a rich and socially prominent young man and continues to add lie to lie, her short-lived happiness is doomed.

The story, which derives from a book by Mary Hastings Bradley, becomes so absurd and melodramatic that it adds nothing to a sensitive problem from real life. This is unfortunate because the two young actors involved (Sonya Wilde and James Franciscus) are quite attractive and capable. Further, the theme of this film, developed so well in "Lost Boundaries," deserves more serious restatement now when racial issues are being continuously debated and so bitterly contested.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

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COMMUNICATIONS

"THE CLASSICS IN AMERICA"

Cleveland, Ohio

TO THE EDITORS: I looked in vain in Horace Gregory's perceptive article "The Classics in America" (April 1) for a word about Edith Hamilton who, in her *The Greek Way* and *The Roman Way,* together with her clean-cut and lucid versions of Aeschylus and Euripides, has probably done more for the classical revival in this country than any ten universities together. I looked too for at least a mention of the new or fairly new translations of Sir John Sheppard, Louis MacNeice, E. I. Watling, Philip Velacott. It is true that these were not first published in America but they are excellent versions and are displayed in every campus bookstore. Most of all, I wondered how the English poet Paul Roche's *The Oedipus Plays of Sophocles* could have been passed over. It is an American publication, i.e., really and truly and firstly printed in this country. In one year I understand it has sold over 100,000 copies.

"Tone deafness," indeed, as Mr. Gregory says, "plagues most of the translations," brilliant though they may be on other counts. But each of Paul Roche's three plays is so audibly and dramatically exciting that it lingers in the mind as memorable poetry. They keep clear of that shallow clarity which is the besetting sin of many of the new translations. There is an undertone of effort running along with the words which gives them the three-dimensional quality of the Greek. Surely, no amount of fidelity to the text (and fidelity Roche shares equally with the other translators in the Chicago series) can make up for infidelity to the central spirit of Greek tragedy, that beauty of sound which moves us even before we understand the words.

Sir Gilbert Murray may indeed have gone overboard with his pseudo-Swinburnian—so intolerable to our ears—but at least he understood the problem. Paul Roche understands the problem and does not go overboard, though he takes some wonderful risks (as Sophocles did with the Greek). Using the full range of modern English—urged on from the wings by the King James Bible and Shakespeare and Milton and even on occasion by uses of the conversational cliché —he sweeps us out of the classroom and carries us across the centuries. Pride and hate and love and fear and pity have not changed. He makes us feel this.

I, and many others, think that English speaking people will be quoting some of Roche's lines from Sophocles (and we hope in time, from Aeschylus, Euripides and Aristophanes) for generations to come.

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One sensitive student asked: "Was Sophocles really this good?" "Hush," I was tempted to answer, "Not so loud! We may well expect excellence, for a time, to shock the ears of earnest mediocrity."

BARBARA ANGELL.

CONNECTICUT BIRTH CONTROL LAW

New Haven, Conn.

TO THE EDITORS: In your December 18 issue John Cogley wrote the following: "The Catholic, contrary to a widespread misunderstanding, is not bound to support existing anti-birth control laws and has no obligation to put them on the books where they do not already exist." I would like to apply this point to a case in which, as I read it, an obligation to repeal such a law exists.

Many states have prohibitive laws whose wisdom and fairness may be challenged, but the Connecticut law is probably the worst example. The Law reads: "Any person who shall use any drug, medicinal article or instrument for the purpose of preventing conception shall be fined not less than fifty dollars or imprisoned not less than sixty days nor more than one year or be both fined and imprisoned." (Revised Statutes, S. 8568, V.3, p. 3101 for 1955.) Note that the law refers not to the distribution of contraceptives but to their *use* on private property. This law was enacted in the wake of the Federal legislation against interstate traffic in contraceptive devices (Comstock Law, 1873) as were the similar laws then adopted and now largely repealed or modified in many states. It is obvious that the law is not the result of a non-existent Catholic pressure in 1873, but one must admit that Catholic pressure is at least part of the reason why the periodic attempts to repeal the Connecticut law in recent years have failed.

The moral issue involved may be simply stated. Most Catholics interpret the Natural Law to mean that any direct frustration of human coitus is contrary to the naturally intended purpose of the generative organs, and hence, is offensive to the Creator of human nature. Does this mean that those Catholics are bound to support legislation which would make such actions a *criminal* offense? No.

It is a cardinal point of Catholic doctrine that the prohibition of contraceptives is required by Natural Law, quite apart from its being also part of the positive ecclesiastical law. This means that the precept falls under the purview of an informed conscience. Conscience is the judgment or verdict of a man exercising ordinary human reason, acting in good faith after a persistent effort to inform himself of the relevant considerations; as such it is the formal norm of morality. No moralist holds that we have an immediate and unshakable grasp of any but the most gen-

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eral principles of the Natural Law. Furthermore, "we do not judge of the law nor of the objective moral order in its absolute nature, but always and only according to the (fallible) knowledge we have of it" (O. Lottin). In short, the Natural Law is not a set of ready-made statutes, but a set of principles requiring interpretation.

My own experience requires me to admit that many of our Protestant and Jewish brethren who accept the notion of Natural Law do *not,* after serious reflection and acting in good faith or even from religious conviction, find in that Law the prohibitions which some Catholics do. It is proper and advantageous to both sides that there should be debate about the interpretation of less obvious principles of the law. (What else does it mean to say that the Natural Law is a matter of informed reason and conscience?) But it is surely wrong, contrary to the demands of both justice and charity, for Catholics to enforce their reading of Natural Law.

It is true that one of the functions of positive or man-made law is to render explicit the precepts of Natural or God-made law (Catholics are not alone in holding this), but clearly there is a distinction between the precepts of the law which directly affect the common good and those which are more properly matters of personal or family morality. It will not always be easy to make such a distinction. For example, bigamy, incest, mishandling of children by parents, inheritance arrangements belong in varying degrees to what I have loosely called "family morality" and yet most of us agree, I suppose, that the state is justified in regulating such cases. Each case must be decided on its own merits. I am arguing that a statute which makes it a criminal offense to use contraceptives in the privacy of one's home is a clear violation of the rights of personal conscience.

Aside from the question of whether this law is an infringement of personal rights, one can argue common-sensically that a law which is quite obviously inoperative and unenforceable is *ipso facto* null and void, and a corroding influence on public respect for the law. It is time to recall the wise and sane realism of an old Catholic legal tradition typified in the thirteen-hundred-year-old definition of Isidore of Seville: "Human law should be honest, just, possible to human nature, in accordance with the customs of the country, suited to the place and time, necessary, useful, directed not to private ends but to the common good, and plainly stated."

Let Catholics show that their zeal to inform and perfect their own consciences is matched by a zeal that others should be free to pursue the same ends.

DANIEL O'CONNOR.

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BOOKS

The Intellectual Universe of Aquinas

ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY. By Etienne Gilson. Doubleday. $5.50.

By WILLIAM BRYAR

THIS distinguished, quite readable, yet highly sophisticated book deals with "elements" by no means pedagogically elementary, since they are important springs of a thought rich in depth and scope. If it be a question of elements of the thought of Aquinas, these are great elements, like earth, air, fire and water. The thought of Aquinas, viewed as a whole, comprises an intellectual universe intuitively discernible as highly variegated and profoundly integrated. It is, possibly, a universe which has a place for some part or the whole of all thought which is truly Christian and truly philosophical. It is, in any case, a universe which Gilson sees as going beyond Philosophy, and which Aquinas saw to be less than the fullness of Christian experience.

The book is at once an enormous achievement of scholarship and a notable advance in educational writing. The student will see, as it were, the study of Aquinas as it proceeds through the world of scholarship, past, present and future. The beauty of this achievement should prove the strongest invitation to the reading of the greatest works of Aquinas himself and to a life of scholarship which searches out such minds as his. And in the reading of Aquinas himself there should come an unsurpassable educational experience and historical insight, a guarantee against simplemindedness in habits of reading and in thinking about the Middle Ages, philosophy and religion. For the reader open to the religion of Aquinas, it should prove an extraordinary Christianizing experience.

Gilson provides a number of frameworks within which to explicate the detail of *Summa Theologica* I, 1-26 (the discussion of the existence and attributes of God), and much more briefly some other sections (the discussions of creation, man, knowledge, will, etc.) The interpretative frameworks are these: Aquinas' conception of himself as a teacher, his conception of theology, the previous history of philosophical and theological thought, Christian doctrine, and, most important, Aquinas' notion of being. The multiplicity and variety of these frameworks, the way they are used and the connections between them, provide what is itself, perhaps, the crucial problem for a reader of Gilson's book.

Aquinas' notion of being, to mention one framework, may refer either to the principle in every actually existing thing in virtue of which we say that it *is* ("esse") or to the total reality of God which is best named by reference to that in virtue of which we say that God *is* ("Esse"). The notion of being serves Gilson, explicator of Aquinas, in a way that is reminiscent of the

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comprehensive service of Plato's "Idea of the Good" to the "Philosopher" in his quest for all "Knowledge." Thus, other basic concepts in Aquinas, such as "unity," "truth," and "goodness," and his argumentation on quite various topics, are regarded as truly understandable only in the light of his notion of being. When materials in the texts cannot be reduced to this notion of being, however, Gilson has recourse to history and theology, i.e., to the contingencies of the historical-intellectual inheritance and to Aquinas' conception of theology as inclusive of philosophical and religious tradition. What is more, the notion of being is itself accounted for by Christian doctrine and the controlling place of Christian doctrine in Aquinas' conception of himself as a teacher.

Two problems immediately suggest themselves: Gilson's difficulties in trying to handle the complete text in the light of Aquinas' notion of being and the lack of *philosophical* justification of this notion. These problems are related, on the level of scholarship this time, to historicism and theologism, especially interesting in the case of the author of *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* whose failure in philosophy itself was seen as a consequence of attempts to make other disciplines do the proper work of philosophy. Consider, for example, Aquinas' transcendental terms, terms analogically predicable of every reality, terms needed if he is to talk in the way he does about the First Cause and about caused things. Granted that the transcendental terms—"ens," "res," "aliquid," "unum," "verum," "bonum"—are predicable of every reality, could we not hope that all of them, reinterpreted as they may be in the light of the notion of being, contribute more, each in its own right, to the subsequent explication of the detail or argumentation? Need we explain so much on historical grounds, however historical everything in history may be?

As for theologism on the level of scholarship, need the author of *Being and Some Philosophers,* who has alerted us to the notion of being

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as implicit in ordinary language sentences, retreat so far from the search for an origin of Aquinas' knowledge of the notion of being in the experience of sensible things? Need he restrict Aquinas' justification of the notion of being to its implicit presence in Christian doctrine, a limitation perhaps more proper to the perspective of the *Spirit of Medieval Philosophy?* Does the succession of Gilson's dialectical interpretative frameworks so divide the textual territory that one necessarily fails to see any philosophical genesis of the notion of being, as well as important internal keys to his conceptual framework other than the notion of being?

As these questions suggest, Gilson's book is exciting and challenging. It is a serious contender against much of the older tradition of "aristotelico-thomistic" readings of Aquinas. Unless, of course, Gilson be the final synthesis, requiring only application to matters of detail, the book's excellence should challenge readers to try most seriously to go beyond this antithesis, to a reading of Aquinas which sees him as widely and as deeply as he can be seen. It appears to this reader of Gilson's *Elements* that he has done more to lead us toward a perceptive reading of *Summa Theologica* I, 1-26, and toward the recognition of major problems of interpretation than has any other commentator.

Catholic Humanism

ERASMUS AND HIS TIMES. By Louis Bouyer, Cong. Orat. Newman. $3.75.

By MICHAEL NOVAK

FATHER Bouyer's little book is not precisely named, even in French *(Autour d'Erasme);* it concerns more the times than the man. It is a study of the Catholic experiment with humanism in the early crises of the modern world. It is too brief (220 pages) to do much more than touch the theme, but it is valuable for two or three reasons.

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authoritative Catholic impetus in the Renaissance, from the warm, personal and official support of popes to the enthusiastic support of great minds like those of Nicholas of Cusa, Vittorino da Feltre, and Pico Della Mirandola. Secondly, it discusses incisively the theological thought of Erasmus, easily seconding Cardinal Gasquet's verdict concerning its orthodoxy, praising one aspect of its vision, noting its weakness. Finally, it creates an image of a number of men possessed of a great desire to synthesize into living Christianity the discoveries of the new era opened by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; and it describes their failure.

Father Bouyer writes five short "books." The first is on the papacy and Renaissance, a surprising revelation of confidence, encouragement, hope, and only at the very end, after long perseverance, reversal into the harsh forms of the Counter-Reformation. The second is on the humanist theology of that admirable spirit Nicholas of Cusa, of da Feltre, Mirandola, of Erasmus and More. Next Father Bouyer gives an extended summation and review of Augustin Renaudet's nearly definitive *Etudes erasmiennes 1521-1529* (Paris: 1939). In the fourth section, because he believes Renaudet's otherwise sensitive study is gravely deficient in theological competence, he discusses the theology of Erasmus. He finds Erasmus the "father of positive theology," the first great perceiver of the significance of history for theology, the ardent seeker for Christian liberty, the loving student of the human element in Christianity and of the figure of Christ as dominating all of Scripture, theology, and life. The modern exegete, the modern ecclesistical historian, the kerygmatist—all will find Erasmus opening the doors on what they do today. In a final "book," Father Bouyer dwells briefly on the Cardinals of Paul III, Contarini, Sadoleto, and Pole, whose attempts "to keep open the dialogue with Protestants," as we would say today, only ended in failure; and Balthasar Castiglione, the great lay humanist, whose juxtaposition of humanism and Christian-

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ity marked rather exactly the era's failure at synthesis.

The lesson Father Bouyer draws is sketched in only a few sentences. It is that the enthusiastic spirits of the Renaissance lacked the philosophical profundity *intellectually* to assimilate their age. The synthesis they often effected in their personal lives was therefore neither far-reaching nor stable. Repelled by Scotistic and nominalistic philosophy—the prevalent philosophy of the schools—they were unable, as Father Bouyer in *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism* found the Protestants unable, to understand or to love the philosophic task. Hence, they were unable ever metaphysically to resolve the severe problems of nature and grace, God and free will, which must underlie the intellectual synthesis of a stable, viable, free Christian Humanism. And in the four centuries since then, one wonders if we are any farther along—indeed, if the anti-rationalism of existentialist theology is not stronger than ever.

To Choose and Act

ISSUES OF FREEDOM. By Herbert J. Muller. Harper. $3.50.

By RICHARD L. SCHOENWALD

PROFESSOR Muller writes in his foreword, "Although this work amounts to a philosophical essay, it was conceived as an introduction to a history of freedom." I have the feeling that he wanted to get some things straight before tackling a history of freedom. Such an intention would explain the bare and schematic quality of this book. After defining freedom as "the condition of being able to choose and to carry out purposes," he has outlined its connections with man's nature; with human activities such as technology, religion, and art; and with ideals related to freedom, among which he places justice, equality, fraternity.

The book really is only an outline. It lacks the data, the test cases which would bring its propositions to life. Very often they seem merely

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flat, and even commonplace; surely a theme as great as freedom merits fuller treatment. I think Professor Muller would agree: his scientific humanism has room for emotion, and he does feel very strongly about freedom; in works such as *The Uses of the Past* and *The Loom of History* he has demonstrated that he can deal vividly with a wide range of evidence in support or denial of a contention.

Professor Muller's book has whetted my appetite. I would like very much to see him work out, for example, his assertion, which many would dispute, that men cannot have freedom in the West without faith in progress. I want to see him develop his notion that "champions of individual freedom . . . are a rare type historically, and have rarely been popular." I would expect that, given the chance to array materials from history, sociology, and anthropology, he would have a good deal to say about the relation between freedom and invention, to which he gives only a paragraph here. These ideas, and other questions which he raises, suggest how little we actually know about freedom.

Perhaps we know so little because we have been living out an understanding of freedom, rather than thinking it out. Getting and spending and moving, we may have come to equate freedom and social mobility, with the result that, if we are interested in reading anything at all, we read sociologists or social commentators who dilute the sociologists' work. Up to now we have wanted to know how to move, how to choose the best of several places to move to; we have not wanted to examine the idea of moving, we have not wanted to scrutinize the purposes which guide our moving.

Many signs hint that we may not be able to keep on in this way much longer. To take only one indication: Paul Goodman has been describing in *Commentary* the plight of American youth today. This country seems to have turned into a gigantic street corner, and all of its young people, delinquent and "good" or "nice" alike, are crowded on it, hanging around and asking questions. Where is it worth going? How

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do you know it's worth going? And what happens if you don't like it when you get there, or if you do something wrong on the way? Then why move at all? Can anybody really choose a purpose and then try to make it come true? Who's free?

Asking such questions about freedom, asking them with the voice of tormented youth or in the scholar's concerned yet controlled tone, certainly doesn't mean that the end of the West is at hand. I don't believe that men must either live in freedom or spend their time pondering over it. As Professor Muller reminds us, in many situations we do not have to choose one thing or another. We could attempt both to live freely and to inquire how our attempt is succeeding. Inquiry need not mean a loss of zest or a disintegration of morale. What many of us have long appeared to lack is the desire to seek and to find, the determination to give form to what we know about past times and about the condition of our own time, and the will to use that knowledge. Professor Muller has sketched one program for investigation. He has caught a need of the age: to look squarely at freedom.

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sensibility," an overriding concern with novelty and immediacy of effect; the heritage, in short, which that generation of painters bequeathed to modern art and which ended, in Valéry's view, with the decadence and audacity of Cubism.

That style he never mentions, except obliquely, but it crops up again and again in his discussions, like a disturbing thought at the back of his mind. He dismisses it *in absentia,* as it were. Yet, despite Valéry's lack of sympathy with most of the painters he discusses, this is a brilliant book: witty, polished, full of dangerous and seductive ideas, bristling with contradictions.

One might begin, perhaps, with the two ideas which seemed to form the basis of Valéry's standard for art. He was "a great lover of strength of will in art"—the ability to deal with the most recalcitrant materials, to undertake even the most uncongenial tasks. For this reason he admired, above all, Leonardo da Vinci—painter, scientist, inventor—a man of all-encompassing intellect. And this led him directly to his second tenet; his wish that the artist should be a "total man." Yet Valery failed to see in the painters of his time, and particularly in Cézanne, that fixity of will towards the perfection of an idea which we admire so much in Cézanne today. Corot, Manet, Monet, Renoir; all become the subject, in these discussions, of a mind capable of the finest distinctions. Yet one senses behind Valéry's appreciation, an ideological distrust.

The specific work of art, however, seldom comes up for discussion in Valéry. He readily admits that it is not the work itself which interests or inspires him, but the ideas which spring to his mind when confronted by a work of art, and particularly those works which enable him to detect the process of creation, which give him a sense of the artist's problems and his solutions. Valéry refines upon these ideas and these difficulties until he comes up with the marvellously abstract thought: *"Why, after all, should the making of a work or art not be considered a work of art in itself?"* . . . and we are thrown,

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helter skelter, into the middle of Tenth Street or the plushier establishments in uptown New York.

Taken out of context, these ideas of Valéry's slip with amazing adequacy into an apologia for today's action painting,—that is, those paintings in which the work itself is valued as the "residue" of the painter's struggle with himself, the evidence of his battle with his own "stream of consciousness." Valéry writes that he is thinking of "problems of a higher order, incomprehensible to most people (and even to some who practice the craft), which the true artist *invents* and poses for himself. He invents—as one might a form, an idea, an experience—hidden conditions and restrictions, invisible obstacles which accentuate his design, impede his facility, delay his satisfaction, so as to draw from him in the end what he was seeking, which is . . . what he did not know he possessed. I hold that this invisible inner work of inventing desires and scruples is perhaps a more profoundly important work than the visible one to which his effort tends." Yet what occasions this totally abstract idea? The most representational art—a bust of himself being sculptured by a little-known artist.

Despite his disapproval, he was well aware of the seductive qualities of Impressionist painting. Although his appreciation of Corot is one of the finest in the book, he could still feel that the importance which Corot gave to landscape and the ensuing public taste for it, had led to a decline in traditional and difficult standards. It is this capacity for ideal analysis which accounts for many of the most interesting pages in the book, the anecdotes about Degas, Mallarmé, Zola—pages of superb gossip. But the gossip always has its point, always defines the person. Valéry took pleasure in the way in which a man's ideas and a man's work revealed the man himself. This is, perhaps, one of the most engaging aspects of his own book. Aside from its elegance and wit, it is a picture of the man himself and his thinking—civilized, provocative, cultivated. He was an autocrat of the abstract idea.

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Academic Comedy

EATING PEOPLE IS WRONG. by Malcolm Bradbury. Knopf. $4.

By NORA MAGID

AT THE foreign-student tea, where sympathy for all these people for not being English lies over the gathering like some terrible woolly blanket, the nun from India remarks pleasantly to the German she has just met. "Germany has many poets. There is Goethe and Heine and Rilke to name only a few. It is very good of you to come to England, of course, since you were fighting it only a few years ago. It is very civilized of all of us to forget this so easily. I think we are all very developed personalities."

"Yes," agrees the German, fatuously, "I see you are a nun. I would very much like to be a nun. There are many advantages. Of course, one would have to be a woman." This madhatter patter—a lampoon that borders perilously close to literal truth—is one of Malcolm Bradbury's special talents. Added to this he has a flair for wildly uninhibited farce and a capacity for making simultaneously a serious moral and a serious social point.

The undistinguished provincial British university is, of course, fair game these days. Nothing is missed. The students are rejects from the better colleges and will never be the small band of brave malcontents their professor dreams will share his disgusts, his well-developed taste for integrity and scrutiny. The sociologists—"if only their social engineering gets around to enough things, life will surely be a bowl of cherries"—drift like flocks of birds on American grants while they consider the in-built abrasions in the human condition. "You wake up one morning and find the ones you are interested in have risen from their perches and have settled again, en masse, on the other side of the continent." The administrator wonders despairingly what *else* he has to do to get a knighthood. The graduate student finds things Freud never

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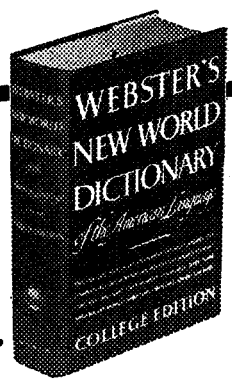

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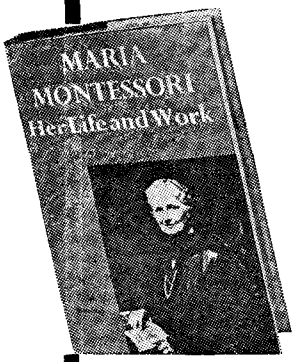

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dreamt of in a consideration of fish imagery in the tragedies of Shakespeare. The colonial is sent at enormous expense by a terrorist society to learn at a British university by British methods how to overthrow the British empire. The unwashed poet is a young man so angry that he is livid. "Does it ever occur to you," he asks his squirming audience, "that your comparative civilization, if that's what it is, is a condition of your freedom from financial embarrassment?"

The central character is the liberal professor of the humanities who is oddly nostalgic for an England he never knew, who tends, in his effort to be decent and understanding, to address his students as if they were babies and he were Dr. Spock, and who is in his own way so dedicated to the proposition that the unexamined life is not worth living that he examines to a fare-thee-well and forgets how to live or how to feel. "A tired sophistication runs up and down one's spine; one has seen everything tried and seen it fail."

Though the implication seems to be that in a seedy world alienation and problems of communication are sadly inevitable, Mr. Bradbury's sense of high comedy makes this an uproariously funny book. He is a master of everything from the casual throwaway lines—Treace "began to read *Encounter* which, as usual, was full of articles about Japan"—to scenes of pure physical farce unmatched since the cigarette-burn episode in *Lucky Jim*. Despite the disquieting emphasis on social dislocation in an age that calls all in doubt, this is surely the funniest academic novel that has yet been written.

REVIEWERS

William Bryar is a member of the philosophy department at Hunter College, New York.

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